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ABSTRACT

This unit focuses on Thomas Jefferson's route from his home at Monticello in Virginia to the White House when he traveled to Washington in November of 1800 for the upcoming presidential election. The document traces his journey by phaeton, a four wheeled light carriage, from Monticello to: (1) James Madison's home at Montpelier, a distance of 28 miles, on November 24, 1800; (2) Fleetwood on November 25th, a distance of 31 miles; (3) Browns Tavern at what is now Manassas, Virginia, on November 26th, a distance of 33.5 miles; and (4) through Falls Church to Washington on November 27th, a distance of 34 miles. The unit is illustrated with sketches of a phaeton, a small flat bed skiff that was often used as a ferry, Monticello, Zimmerman's tavern, New Gate Tavern, a dependency or small outbuilding at Jefferson's friend's home known as Fleetwood, Montpelier, the White House, and a portrait of Jefferson. Two maps show the topology of the area and Jefferson's route. The text of the document describes Jefferson's journey as can be pieced together from searching his letters, public records, and what buildings and roads are still in existence today. Thirteen different class assignments are given for different areas of the lesson. Issues highlighted are: changes in means of travel, the neoclassical and vernacular architecture of the time, and Jefferson's character traits that can be learned from evidence presented in the lesson. The lesson uses different kinds of historical inquiry. Students see how the use of many different sources can provide the evidence necessary to trace Jefferson's route. (DK)

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ED 365 599

Thomas Jefferson's Road to the White House:

Teaching with Historic Places

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SO 023 573

Teaching with Historic Places

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He cherished his home at Monticello, and his farm. From high in Virginia's piedmont, he looked over the plains towards the tidewater. He thrived on the scholarship, experimentation, family relationships and hospitality that were much of his life there. But he loved equally the young nation he helped create, and he believed strongly that the country needed new leadership to guide it into the nineteenth century. When Thomas Jefferson left Monticello on a cold November day in 1800 for the new Federal City of "Washington on the Potowmac," he was not certain that the Republican Party he led would win a majority of the electoral vote cast by the sixteen states, or that he would become the third President of the United States.

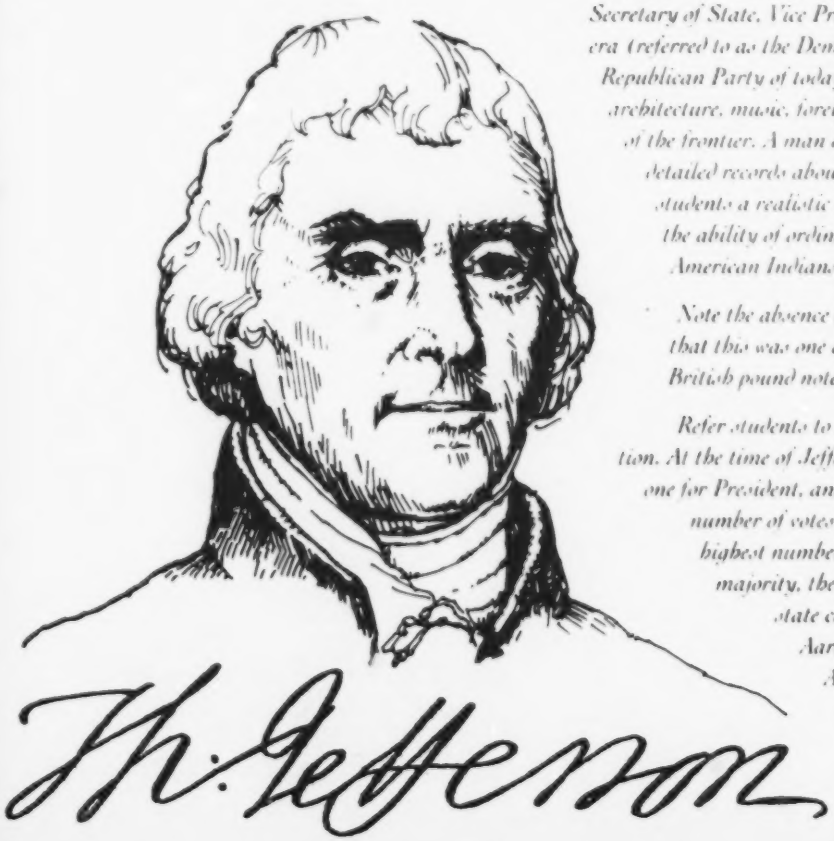
This lesson about Thomas Jefferson's journey from Monticello to Washington is based on his *Memorandum Books* and other writings which record his expenses and travel notes. Local historians and subject area experts provided additional background information on the places mentioned in Jefferson's account. Visual evidence includes maps, and sketches from drawings and photographs. Teachers can use the lesson with students at different grade levels to enrich their understanding of history, government and geography; and to strengthen their learning skills in these areas. Vocabulary words in bold may require further explanation. Most student activities can be done in groups.

Setting the Stage

Review Thomas Jefferson's contributions to the nation: author of the Declaration of Independence, his struggle for freedom of speech and religion in Virginia, his roles as Secretary of State, Vice President, and leader in forming the Republican Party of that era (referred to as the Democratic-Republican Party by some, but different from the Republican Party of today). Mention Jefferson's many and diverse interests: politics, architecture, music, foreign languages, agricultural experimentation, and exploration of the frontier. A man of great vision, at the same time he kept very careful and detailed records about his finances, his meetings, his farm and domestic life. Give students a realistic image of Jefferson as a person of his time on issues such as: the ability of ordinary persons to govern themselves, slavery, and removal of American Indians from the frontier.

Note the absence of a national currency at the time of Jefferson's election, and that this was one of his concerns. He paid his expenses during the trip with British pound notes, Spanish bits, as well as with dollars and cents.

Refer students to Article II, Section 1, and Amendment Twelve of the Constitution. At the time of Jefferson's election, electors cast two ballots without designating one for President, and one for Vice President. The candidate with the greatest number of votes was selected as President. The candidate with the second highest number of votes was selected as Vice President. If there was no majority, the election was decided by the House of Representatives, each state casting one vote. This is what occurred when Jefferson and Aaron Burr received a tie in the electoral college. The Twelfth Amendment was enacted shortly after Jefferson assumed office to correct this confusion. Electors now cast distinct votes for President and Vice President.



Student Activities

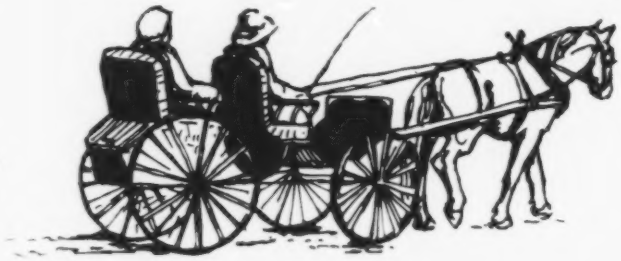
Tracing Thomas Jefferson's Route to the White House

❶ *Locate on the inset map where your community is in relation to Monticello and Washington, D.C. Determine how the borders of Virginia and Washington, D.C. have changed since Jefferson's time. Locate Virginia's piedmont, the tidewater, mountain, and inland valley geographic regions. Is Washington, D.C. in a different geographic region than Monticello?*

❷ *Look at the drawings of Monticello, Montpelier and the Jefferson Memorial in this lesson. Make a list of the architectural features they have in common. Look for such things as the shape, size, number and placement of: columns, porches, doors and windows. On your way to and from school, locate old and new buildings with these* ***neoclassical*** *features.*

November 23, 1800: Leaving Monticello

Thomas Jefferson began building Monticello when he was twenty-six years old. He completed it forty years later. He devised a number of convenient contrivances for his home and farm. Jefferson also designed the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond and the University of Virginia. He is said to have **anonymously** submitted designs for the new Federal City and the White House. In books, he encountered the Italian architect, **Palladio**. In Europe, he was exposed to **classical** Roman architecture. Buildings and landscapes which emphasize **symmetry**, **balance** and **harmony** are sometimes referred to as **neoclassical** in style. Monticello is considered a fine example of Roman **neoclassical** style.



❶ *Using the information in the lesson, make a list of the kinds of difficulties Jefferson might have had travelling this first day. Compare this to travelling by automobile today.*

❷ *During Jefferson's and Madison's time, determine what kinds of difficulties friends and colleagues might have had staying in touch and taking care of business. How have things changed today? Decide if the changes have improved our relationships with people and our ability to get work done.*

November 24, 1800: To Montpelier—28 miles

Jefferson headed for the home of James Madison at Montpelier, near Orange, Virginia. He probably travelled in a **phaeton**, a four-wheel light carriage pulled by one or two horses. He hired Davey Bowles, a free Black, to accompany him. According to a farmer's diary for the day, there was an "exceeding hard frost and high cold winds" in the region. He travelled to Montpelier many times on a network of familiar roads. Many of these roads still exist. His *Memorandum Books* tell that he stopped south of Gordonsville to buy corn for his horses, which cost him 12 1/2 cents, probably paid for with a Spanish bit (one bit equaled 12 1/2 cents).

Jefferson and Madison were life-long friends. They did not always agree on political matters, but they respected each other. During this visit, they were probably most interested in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions. These were Jefferson's and Madison's effort to resist the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 which they believed would limit the free speech of those who criticized government leaders and actions. Jefferson and Madison exchanged ideas and workers as they built their homes and improved their farms. The sketch of Montpelier is taken from a 19th century drawing of Madison's home. We know from a number of Madison's records that it includes additions to Montpelier that occurred after this visit by Jefferson, such as the one-story wings on the house and the garden temple (left).

One reason we believe Jefferson spent the night at Montpelier is that he wrote a letter to his son-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, before leaving in the morning. He asked Randolph to locate a book he had left at Monticello, and send it on to Washington.

November 25, 1800: To Fleetwood—31 miles

There was still a "vast cold" in the region as Jefferson set out from Montpelier in the morning. He crossed the Rapidan River at Downey's **Ford**, following the Carolina Road to Stevensburg. The Carolina Road was first a major trail for eastern American Indian tribes. Settlement and **treaties** forced the Indians to find new routes west of the Blue Ridge. In the early days, the Carolina Road was known for its lawlessness. By 1800, the road was less dangerous. Parts of the Carolina Road remain. Other parts have disappeared or they have been joined by newer roads.

Jefferson stopped at Zimmerman's Cross Keys Tavern in Stevensburg which he described as "an indifferent house." The town was originally named York. Local historians tell us that it was the oldest and largest town in the region into the 18th century. During Jefferson's time, residents in the area, including Reuben Zimmerman, hoped Stevensburg would become the site of the University of Virginia. The town is quieter now. Zimmerman's Tavern still stands, looking very much like it did when Thomas Jefferson stopped there. Since then, the building has served as a Methodist parsonage, a post office and private home. This style of building is known as **vernacular** architecture, which means a style of building that is commonly used in a region.

Jefferson continued on the Carolina Road to Fleetwood, the farm of his friend John Strode near present-day Brandy Station. Strode owned the region's largest **armaments** factory in Culpeper, Virginia. He served in the Virginia House of Delegates. He was one of those who hoped the University of Virginia would be built at Stevensburg. Two small **dependencies** remain at Fleetwood. They were possibly used as slave cabins, a kitchen, or some other work place. These dependencies are also **vernacular** in their architectural style.

Fleetwood Hill was later the site of the Battle of Brandy Station on June 9, 1863, when the Confederate cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart defeated the Union forces in the largest cavalry battle ever fought in this **hemisphere**. Tradition says there was a "remarkable **spring**" at Fleetwood that was a watering place for both northern and southern armies during the Civil War. Nearby on Route 754, there is a monument to the Civil War battle fought there.

*❶ Compare the drawings of Zimmerman's, the Fleetwood dependencies and Newgate Tavern with Monticello, Montpelier, the White House and the Jefferson Memorial. Which are more **vernacular** in style? Which are more **neoclassical**? Can you find buildings in your neighborhood that are designed in **vernacular** styles similar to the drawings in the lesson?*

❷ Are there historic markers, plaques, or monuments in your community? Decide what events in local, state or national history have occurred in your community that should be marked.

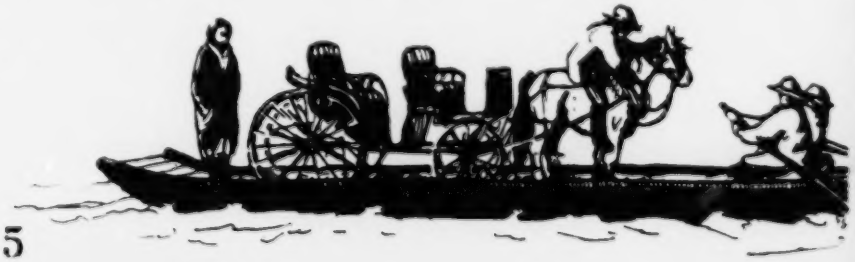
November 26, 1800: To Brown's Tavern—33.5 miles

Jefferson crossed the Rappahannock at Norman's Ford near present-day Remington. He left the Carolina Road and headed northeast towards the town of New Market. New roads were developing to carry growing numbers of travellers and commerce. Jefferson urged a later traveller to get "very particular directions," through the maze of roads in the area. He recorded only one stop along the way for oats.

Brown's Tavern is no longer standing. On an earlier trip, Jefferson mentioned that Champs Race Ground was near Brown's tavern. Using this information, local historians place the tavern near the intersection of the old Dumfries Road and the newer Brentsville Road in Prince William County. This location is compatible with Jefferson's mileage for the day. Jefferson describes Brown's as "a poor house but obliging people." He paid $2.875 (about $29) for his dinner and room. The village of New Market has since been swallowed up by the newer town of Manassas that grew after the arrival of the Southern Railroad in the 1850's.

❸ Trace the railroad line from Charlottesville to Washington, D.C. Note its route in relationship to Stevensburg, Culpeper, Manassas/New Market. What effect might the coming of the railroad have on the growth and disappearance of towns?

❹ Determine if there are newly built roads in your community, or roads that are no longer there, or roads that have changed their names. Ask elders in your community to help you with this, or look at older maps.



❶ *List the reasons why more old buildings seem to disappear along Jefferson's route the closer we come to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Then make a list of the* ***pros and cons*** *for protecting historic sites. Consider what kinds of places should be protected, and under what circumstances historic places might be altered or torn down. Choose a building along Jefferson's route that has disappeared. Make a presentation to the class on whether or not the building should have been saved.*

❷ *Determine if Washington, D.C. is the only place the U.S. government conducts business today. Decide if it still makes sense to keep Washington an independent district. List other options.*

Putting it all together

❶ *List Thomas Jefferson's character traits that you have learned from the the evidence presented in the lesson. Consider how these traits might influence the kind of President he would become.*

❷ *This lesson uses many different kinds of* ***historical inquiry****. List the sources used to locate Jefferson's route, and the places he visited along the way. Describe how different pieces of information were used to determine the facts. List those places where there was not enough information to be certain of the facts.*

❸ *Identify a historic place in your community. Decide what kinds of information you would need to learn more about it. List the places and people you might contact to locate this information.*

November 27, 1800: To "Washington on the Potowmac" – 34 miles

The weather was more moderate when Jefferson left in the morning for Washington. He breakfasted at George Newman's New Gate tavern in Centreville. The tavern no longer exists, but there is a photograph of the tavern taken in 1909.

Jefferson continued on to Falls Church, probably using a road that is now Lee Highway, Route 29. He paid 25 cents for oats at Colonel James Wren's tavern in Falls Church. Jefferson described Wren's as "a very decent house and respectable people." Wren's is no longer standing. Archaeological evidence suggests it was located at 312 Broad Street (Leesburg Pike, Route 7).

Jefferson continued along Route 29 into the District of Columbia, most likely to present-day Rosslyn in Arlington, Virginia. There may have been a **causeway**, or **land bridge**, across the Potomac to Mason Island, now known as Roosevelt Island, from where Jefferson took a ferry across the river. John Mason, son of George Mason of Gunston Hall, owned the ferry landings on the Virginia side of the Potomac, on Mason Island, and in Georgetown. At that time, the public ferries were often small, flat bed **skiffs**. Most likely, boatmen rowed the ferries across the fast moving river. The journey took about 25 minutes and cost Jefferson 62 1/2 cents.

The public landing in Georgetown is believed to be at the bottom of 34th Street, then Frederick Street. When he landed in Georgetown, Jefferson would have seen a busy port town with shipping, manufacturing, marketing and a diverse group of residents. The Forest-Marbury House from that era remains at the corner of 34th and M Streets.

The Constitution provided for an independent Federal district, ten-miles square. Since the city was not a part of a state, residents would not have representatives in the Congress who could vote on legislation. This is still the case today. General George Washington began planning for the Federal city in 1791. General Pierre L'Enfant designed the city, but little of his design had been completed when Jefferson arrived in November 1800. The Capitol Building and White House were only partially completed. An early drawing of the Capitol shows huntsmen and their hounds on the Capitol grounds. There were streams and swamps within the city, and few good roads.

The boundaries of the new city surrounded Georgetown, but Georgetown continued to be governed separately for some time. K Street was the best road from Georgetown into the new city. Jefferson would turn onto Pennsylvania Avenue and proceed up Capitol Hill to his boarding house, Conrad and McMunn's, on the corner of C Street and New Jersey, S.E., a short walk to the new Capitol Building. He had a bedroom and sitting room, and ate his meals with fellow Republicans. Jefferson stayed at Conrad and McMunn's about three months until his election was certain.

On February 17, after thirty-six ballots, the House of Representatives selected Thomas Jefferson as President, and Aaron Burr as Vice President. He was inaugurated March 4, 1801. In 1943, the nation erected a memorial in Washington, D.C. to honor Thomas Jefferson.

Teaching with Historic Places is a cooperative program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service. The program offers educational materials that use historic places to teach topics and skills presented in the elementary and secondary school curricula. It also offers professional development opportunities for teachers and their community partners. For more information, contact Kathleen Hunter, NTHP, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 202/673-4040

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